

SIGNS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

SIXTH SIGN (9:1-41)

A Blind Man Healed

By Arlen L. Chitwood

The last three signs in John's gospel — the healing of the man born blind (ch. 9), the resurrection of Lazarus (ch. 11), and the resurrection of Christ (ch. 20) — include quite a bit of detail in both the text and the context concerning different things pertaining to the signs. In each instance, entire chapters are given over to the matter, though the actual signs are seen in smaller segments of the chapters.

In each chapter (chs. 9, 11, 20), *the negative, antagonistic attitude* of the Jewish religious leaders toward the message being proclaimed through the miraculous, supernatural signs is seen. And this type attitude of Israel's religious leaders can be seen as early as John the Baptist's ministry (proclaiming the message apart from signs), preceding Christ's ministry and the beginning of a manifestation of signs accompanying the message (Matt. 3:7ff).

The nation's religious leaders had positioned themselves among those forming the crowds following John. Then, when Jesus took up the message, exactly the same thing was seen (Matt. 4:17, 25; 8:1; 9:11-13; 12:14, 24ff).

And by the time in Christ's ministry when He had performed the sixth sign recorded in John's gospel (a sign appearing only in John's gospel, performed during the mid to latter part of His ministry), *this negative, antagonistic attitude* of Israel's religious leaders could be seen on every hand (John 7:30-32, 45-53; 8:13-19, 39-59).

Though the sixth sign itself centers around the future of Israel (as the other seven signs), the entire history of Israel — past, present, and future — is given in this sign. As the man was born blind, so it was with Israel. And this is something quite evident in Israel's history and present condition. And the future for Israel is seen in the man being healed, with attendant results.

Central thoughts in the sign in the preceding respect have to do with:

- 1) Blindness from birth.
- 2) Sight ultimately given by Christ through the person washing clay from his eyes in the pool of Siloam.
- 3) A witness concerning Messiah and that which had been done following the blind person receiving sight.
- 4) The healing and subsequent testimony occurring on the Sabbath.

In line with that seen in the sixth sign in John's gospel — with respect to that which this sign foreshadows, having to do with that seen in Isa. 43:10 — *Israel had been blind from birth*. Israel had been *blind* during the two days from Jacob to Christ (or, from Abraham to Christ, carrying matters back two more generations); and Israel has also been blind during the two days of the present dispensation when God has temporarily suspended His national dealings with Israel and is dealing with *the new creation in Christ* rather than *the old creation in Jacob*.

And this is exactly in line with the seventh sign, the resurrection of Lazarus after he had lain in the grave for *four days* (John 11:17) — foreshadowing Israel in the place of death from birth until that future time when the Spirit breathes life into the one who has never really possessed life with respect to that seen in the overall text. Only in that future day, when Israel receives life and sight, will the nation go forth in fulfillment of Isa. 43:10.

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen...”

The meaning of the name of *the pool* where the man born blind was told to wash the clay from his eyes, *the pool of Siloam*, is “Sent.” The man born blind was told to go to a *pool* which meant “Sent.” He was to wash clay from his eyes in this pool, and he was then *to see for the first time in his life relative to that connected with the name of the pool* (vv. 6, 7); and, as a result, the man would go forth with a true message concerning Jesus the Christ (vv. 9-11, 15, 17, 25-27, 30-33).

The same thing is seen from another perspective in Luke chapter twenty-four. Two disciples were walking to Emmaus on *the third day* following the crucifixion, on the day Christ had been raised from the dead (or, on *the seventh day*, counting back to Adam [v. 21]).

And as they walked and “talked together of all the things which had happened,” Jesus drew near to them and walked and spoke with them (vv. 13-15). *But they didn't know Him*. Their eyes “were holden [their vision was withheld, preventing them from recognizing the One in their midst]” (v. 16). The two disciples were *blind* relative to the identity of the One walking and talking with them.

(Note that their blindness, with respect to that which is in view, didn't begin two days earlier at the time Christ was crucified. Rather, these two disciples must be viewed as the man in the sixth sign in John's gospel — representing the whole nation, blind from birth in this respect.)

And Jesus revealed Himself to them, providing them with sight, *in exactly the same manner* seen in John chapter nine. This would have had to be the case, for there is only *one means* through which God provides life or anything connected with life in Scripture. Whether it is man passing from death unto life or sustenance for that life once it has been brought into existence (producing sight, growth, etc.), *God always uses one means alone*.

Everything is accomplished solely through the living Word and the written Word, which are inseparable, for They are simply two manifestations of the same thing. The written Word, which was God, became flesh in the person of the living Word (John 1:1, 14). Everything

in the Old Testament has to do with some facet of the person and work of the Son. And *the whole of this revelation is seen manifested in the living Word.*

God's Witness

The accounts in the Book of Jonah, Luke chapter twenty-four, and John chapter nine, depict that which the entire nation will do once Israel's blindness has been lifted. The entire nation will go forth with a true message concerning Jesus the Christ.

And that message, in possibly its most encapsulated form in Scripture, is seen in the message which Joseph's brothers went forth proclaiming once their eyes had been opened to Joseph's true identity (Gen. 45:1-4, 21ff):

"Ye shall tell...of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen...

...Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt" (Gen. 45:13a, 26a).

The preceding is the type; and with "Joseph" a type of Christ and "Egypt" a type of the world in Scripture, note how the antitype would read in the message which the descendants of Joseph's brethren are going to proclaim in that coming day:

"Ye shall tell...of all My [Jesus'] glory throughout the earth, and of all that ye have seen...

...Jesus is yet alive, and He is Governor over the entire earth."

Note Israel's condition and confession in that coming day, after the nation's blindness has been lifted, as recorded in Isaiah chapters fifty-two through fifty-four. All three chapters are Messianic in their scope of fulfillment, which is something often overlooked when chapter fifty-three is viewed apart from its contextual setting.

In chapters fifty-two and fifty-four, a restored nation is seen back in the land — one which will know the Lord, one which will possess a right relationship to God as the wife of Jehovah, and one which will go forth with joy and singing, publishing glad tidings (52:6-9; 54:1-5). And right in the midst of this entire picture, in chapter fifty-three, the Spirit of God,

through Isaiah, saw fit to place Israel's confession and message which will be carried to the Gentile nations of the earth in that coming day, after Israel's blindness has been lifted.

On the Sabbath, in That Day

The healing of the man born blind in John chapter nine occurred on the Sabbath day, the seventh day. And five of the other eight signs in John's gospel occurred either on the Sabbath or at the conclusion of a series of days which referenced the seventh day, the Sabbath.

This sign being performed on the Sabbath — which had to do with a man's blindness being lifted, pointing to the nation's blindness being lifted — was the central issue in the Pharisees' opposition to that which had occurred (vv. 14-16).

This was also something seen time after time in Christ's ministry. Signs were performed on the Sabbath, and Israel's religious leaders brought accusations against Christ which had to do with a supposed violation of the Sabbath (*cf.* Matt. 12:10-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 13:10-14; John 5:5-18).

And this, in itself, spoke volumes concerning the understanding which Israel's religious leaders possessed pertaining to their own Old Testament Scriptures. They apparently knew the letter of Scripture, but the exact opposite was true when going beyond the letter into the spiritual nature of Scripture. They were ill-equipped to handle Scripture in this manner.

Israel's religious leaders, over centuries of time, had rejected, mistreated, and slain the prophets sent to them. Then, when God sent His Son, He was treated in an even worse manner, for *they knew that He was the Heir of the vineyard. They knew that He was the One about Whom the rejected prophets had spoken* (Matt. 21:35-45; 23:37).

Israel's religious leaders, because of that which had been done throughout the history of the nation, did not know their own Scriptures when the Heir of the vineyard appeared. Had they known their Scriptures, they would have understood the signs being manifested — foreshadowing supernatural, Divine healing and provision for the nation — and they would particularly have understood why the signs

were being performed on the Sabbath day, or on a seventh day, referencing the Sabbath (*cf.* I Cor. 2:6-8).

They would have seen and understood the septenary arrangement of Scripture, which dealt with a septenary arrangement of time; they would have seen and understood that Scripture opens in this manner, dealing with the earth's restoration (establishing an unchangeable pattern concerning how God restores a ruined creation) which foreshadows man's restoration (Gen. 1:1-2:3); and they would have seen and understood that the Sabbath was given to Israel, reflecting back on the opening verses of Scripture, in order to keep the thought ever before the nation that God was going to work six days (6,000 years) in man's restoration and rest the seventh day (the seventh and last 1,000-year period within this established septenary structure).

And had they understood these things, when the Heir of the vineyard appeared on the scene performing miraculous healings on the Sabbath, they would have understood the significance of the events taking place.

They would have seen and understood that the healing of an individual on the Sabbath pointed to the healing of the entire nation on the Sabbath, the seventh 1,000-year period; they would have seen and understood that this healing of the nation would follow God's work of redemption, occurring throughout six preceding days, occurring throughout six preceding 1,000-year periods; and, rather than accusing Christ of violating the Sabbath, they would have seen and understood that *this was the correct day for Him to perform signs of this nature.*

They would have known that Jesus was dealing with *that which would occur "in that day," on the Sabbath:*

"And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see..."

"Then [in that day] the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped" (Isa. 29:18a; 35:5).

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